

# 1 CORINTHIANS

Fall 2021 Study Guide

## PART 1: UNITY

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is written to a specific group of people with unique challenges in their community. But the primary message of 1 Corinthians is evergreen—followers of Jesus are held to a standard of integrity and morality as we seek to represent his new way of life to our neighbours. Paul addresses a variety of experiences and seeks to help the church see them through the lens of Jesus' story. The gospels tell us of the story of Jesus, who through his life, death, and resurrection inaugurated the kingdom of God on earth. He brought all things under the rule of his Father and sends us his followers to implement this further. It is this story that unifies a diverse body of believers and allows us to live in a completely new way fused with the hope of God's Kingdom.

1 Corinthians was written to a church community who Paul knew well. Corinth was a major port city in the ancient world and had lots of temples to Greek and Roman gods, it was a big economic centre, and so Paul strategically went there as a missionary. He spent a year and a half meeting people, talking to them about Jesus, and a whole bunch of people became followers of Jesus, which formed a church community (Acts 18). After a while, Paul moved on to start churches in other towns. Then he started getting reports that things are not going well at all back at the church in Corinth. It was plagued by all sorts of issues, which is why he wrote this letter.

It's broken up into 5 main parts, addressing the 5 main problems that Paul was addressing (unity, sex, food, gatherings, the resurrection). It reads like a collection of short essays on different topics. In each section, he describes the problem, but then he always responds to that problem with some aspect of Jesus' story. He shows that they are not living out what they say they believe. This letter is timeless because it helps the reader think about every main area of life (relationships, family, community, work) through the lenses of what Jesus came to accomplish.

*In chapters 1-4, the problem is that there are these divisions in the church.* Some other teachers have come through town since Paul left. People like Apollos and Peter. People had picked their favourite teacher and then became groupies around that leader. And then started to speak badly and disrespected people who preferred another teacher. Paul responds to this very sarcastically and sharply. Paul reminds them that the church is not a popularity contest. The church is a community of people who are centred around Jesus. Its leaders and teachers as simply servants of Jesus. So, you might like one leader over another, it certainly is not worth dividing over. Certainly not worth speaking poorly

about each other. The center of the church is Jesus and the good news of who he is and what he has done.

*In chapters 5-7, Paul addresses some problems related to sex.* There were numerous people in the church sleeping around. One guy with his stepmom, several others still worshipping at the local temples to Greek gods and sleeping with the prostitutes that worked there. Not only this but there were people in the church who said that this is all fine. We are free in Christ, God's grace is bottomless, right? Paul says, no it is not fine. He uses the gospel to show how depraved this type of thinking is. He says, firstly, Jesus died for your sins. Including the ruin of broken relationships that is caused by sexual misconduct. If you are a Christian, sexual integrity is one of the main ways in which we respond to Jesus' love and grace. Paul also reminds them that just as Jesus was physically raised from the dead, so our bodies will be raised from the dead. This means, what you do with your body matters. It's not yours to do whatever you want with. Being a follower of Jesus means no compromise when it comes to sexual integrity.

*Chapters 8-10, the issue is around food.* Not food preferences, but the meat that was sacrificed in local temples to Greek and Roman gods. There was a split between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians about how to respond. Once again Paul appeals to some core ideas from what Jesus taught. He says, our allegiance first and foremost, is to Jesus as Lord, and not to any other gods. So, if you are in a situation where there is meat that has been dedicated to another god, and there are people around who watch you and conclude 'Oh look Christians worship Jesus, but they can worship other gods too'. Paul says, if that is the case, then don't eat the meat. Your loyalty is to Jesus, and you should love those people more than yourself and not mislead them. As Christians we believe that God is the creator of all things including that animal and the temple idols, we believe, are just pieces of wood and stone. So, if there is nobody around that is going to misunderstand your actions, and you're hungry, eat up! You are free as a new human in Christ, to follow your conscience. But the core principle is love. Love will deny itself and look out for the well-being of other people. God's love is at the core of the story of Jesus.

*In chapters 11-14* Paul moves on to address issues in their weekly worship gathering. Some people were having strong spiritual experiences in the gathering. So, they would start praying out loud in other languages. There were other people, also moved in the spirit, who would start sharing a teaching or a word from God, and then someone would get up and interrupt them because they want to share. It was chaotic and distracting. Especially, to visitors who were

trying to hear the gospel. So, in these chapters, Paul helps them to understand the purpose of this gathering. To help them see what kind of behaviours are appropriate. He says the gathering is a place where God's Spirit should be working through everybody and it should happen in a unified way. Therefore, he develops this metaphor as the church being a human body. It's one, but it has all these different parts, and each part fulfills a unique role. He points out all the different things the Spirit does through these people, all for the building up of the church. Love, again, is the key word in this section. Love will compel each person in the gathering to fulfill their role in serving the others in the gathering.

Some people thought that the purpose of the gathering was to have intense spiritual experiences. Paul says he is a big fan of great spiritual experiences, but if it distracts other people or freaks them out, I should stop it. Because then I am loving myself more than I am loving those people. The gathering around Jesus should be orderly. Thus, everybody can learn and sing and worship and hear God speaking to them.

*The last issue Paul addresses* is the concept of the resurrection of Jesus and the future hope of his followers. Some people in the church were saying that the idea of a resurrection was ridiculous and that it didn't matter to be a Christian. Yet, Paul reacts to this very strongly. He begins by saying that the resurrection is an indispensable part of the story of Jesus. We believe in it because of the hundreds of eyewitnesses that saw Jesus alive in a physical body after being publicly executed by the Romans.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, Paul says, then his death was meaningless. Then, we are all still lost in our sins, and we should just stop being Christians. Paul then shows how Jesus' resurrection was his victory over sin and death... how it's a source of power for us now in the present and how it's a promise of future hope for the whole world.

It's because of the resurrection that we have a reason to be unified, it's the reason we have motivation for sexual integrity, it's the source of power to love others more than ourselves, and ultimately, it is our hope for victory over death. Therefore, the gospel is not just moral advice or a recipe for private spirituality, but an announcement about Jesus that opens a whole new reality. That is what 1 Corinthians is all about: seeing every part of life through the gospel.

*This introduction was adapted from The Gospel Project.*

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

### Why Study Guides?

Dallas Willard contended that Christians commit themselves to practices for the sake of becoming more like Christ. They do this, not to earn their own merit before God, but because they are training in discipleship. Therefore, this study guide is meant to be a tool to help people to train in walking in the way of Jesus. Don't stress over getting it all done. Remember that the goal is not to get it done, but to draw near to Jesus.

### What is the format?

We will work through this study guide over the next 5 weeks. In these first 5 weeks, we will deal with 1 Corinthians 1 to 4, which is all about unity in the church. Contained within the first part of this study guide you will find our covenant and shared practices, some definitions of key terms we will look at, and an explanation of how the days are set out (weekly rhythm).

Then, each week has a morning and evening prayer section to lead us in our daily prayers. The evening prayer includes a suggested worship song for you to listen to. The memory verse section will be on 1 Corinthians 13. It will start with a few verses and then each week we will add some verses. The idea is to have 1 Corinthians 13 memorized by the end of week 5. Similarly, each week has an artwork section that relates to the theme of the week. This will be helpful to approach the theme of the week from a different perspective, getting more of our senses involved.

Each day of the week (starting on the Thursday) has a specific section. Our encouragement is that you read and engage with it. Please take the time to answer the questions etc. and make it your own. We have provided ample space for writing. Some days are more informational than others and certain days have less reading but more 'doing'. Our encouragement is that you do what you can.

Under the 'Action' day (day 5) there is a knowledge check section with some questions to test your understanding of the passage. The answers to these questions can be found in the appendix at the end of the booklet. At the end of each week, we have included a sermon notes page where you can make notes during our gathering. Feel free to write down some questions that arise, which can be discussed in mission group.

I hope it helps us to engage with this section in 1 Corinthians in a meaningful way. Enjoy!

## SOUTHSIDE'S COVENANT AND SHARED PRACTICES

We covenant to be discipled, disciple-making missionaries. We seek God and His Kingdom above all and put our hope in God's transforming action in us and in our neighbourhoods.

In this covenant we will seek to love God:

- with all of our heart, practicing spiritual disciplines of engagement and abstinence.
- with all of our mind, growing in knowledge of God and His Kingdom.
- with all of our strength, generously stewarding our time, talent, treasure and terra.
- by loving our neighbour with justice and compassion, practicing hospitality and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
- by loving one another, joining together in spiritual friendship, accountability and life in proximity.

We believe God has given us a vision of being one church, establishing multiplying, missional, Christian communities through the power of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the Kingdom in our neighbourhoods, cities, nation and world. We have been called by and to Jesus to be in, for and with our neighbourhoods.



We commit to these five practices as tools for training as followers of Jesus:

- **HEART** – Morning and evening prayer so that we become aware of God's presence in our lives.
- **MIND** – Daily Scripture reading so that we are formed by God's story.
- **STRENGTH** – The keeping of Sabbath where we celebrate God's goodness to us.
- **NEIGHBOUR** – Practicing hospitality so that we intentionally develop relationships in order to share our story in light of God's story.
- **ONE ANOTHER** – Blessing each other by gathering weekly in Mission Group and on Sundays, and monthly for discipling.

## DEFINING SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

**CHARACTER:** The comprehensive set of traits that make up the intellectual and ethical substance of a person. A character is primarily a set of dispositions to behave in certain ways in characteristic circumstances. To evaluate a person's character is to focus on the abiding virtues, or excellences, in a person over time instead of simply looking at individual actions.<sup>1</sup>

**GOSPEL:** Word derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Godspell* denoting "glad tidings" or "good news."<sup>2</sup> The message of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God and salvation. In particular, the gospel is the announcement that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have brought about salvation for Israel and the world.

**IRONY:** The Expression of Thought in a form that naturally conveys its opposite. The figure is so-called when the speaker intends to convey a sense contrary to the strict signification of the words employed: not to conceal his real meaning, but to add greater force to it.<sup>3</sup>

**OXYMORON:** A wise saying that seems foolish. This is a figure, in which what is said at first sight appears to be foolish, yet when we come to consider it, we find it exceedingly wise. It is a smart saying, which unites words whose literal meanings appear to be incongruous, if not contradictory; but they are so cleverly and wisely joined together as to enhance the real sense of the words.<sup>4</sup>

**SANCTIFICATION:** A progressive work of God and man that makes us freer from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.

**UNITY:** State of being undivided; having oneness; a condition of harmony.<sup>5</sup>

**WISDOM:** The word wisdom, concerning human beings, is used in a variety of different ways in the OT. The word is often used as virtually synonymous with the term "knowledge," but in its general and secular uses, it commonly indicates applied knowledge, skill, or even cunning. Wisdom could be defined as either "superior mental capacity" or "superior skill."<sup>6</sup>

**WORLDLINESS:** The sinful tendency to conform to the world, to be contrasted with the biblical command to maintain contact with the world while avoiding becoming like the world. Believers are called to live in the world, while not being of the world. This attitude is supremely exemplified in the ministry of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

## WEEKLY RHYTHM

### DAY 1: EXPLORATION (THURSDAY)

The first day of the weekly rhythm will introduce you to the subject of the week and provide thoughts, stories, and definitions to help you begin to get an understanding of the concepts. We'll also provide questions and journaling space so that you can wrestle with what this stuff means in your own life and the life of your community.

### DAY 2: MEDITATION (FRIDAY)

On Day 2, we'll provide you with a scripture or two to soak in for a little while. Read it a couple of times and let it do its work in you. Don't forget the questions on the next page.

### DAY 3: CHANGE (SATURDAY)

The Change Day is where we start to get serious. What does this idea mean in your life? How would your life be different if you began to let it be changed by the Gospel? There are questions for journaling on this day as well.

### DAY 4: COMMUNION (SUNDAY)

This is a rest day or a sabbath. This is a reminder to each of us that taking a break is a very biblical concept. We challenge you to use this day in intentionally restful ways. In other words, hang out with friends or family. Don't multi-task. Don't overschedule. Set aside time on your sabbath day for listening.

### DAY 5: ACTION (MONDAY)

So, by now you've begun to let your heart be changed. Now how about your feet? Action Day is about putting it into practice. As we work our way through these weeks, we'll give you ideas each week for taking action.

### DAY 6: CALIBRATION (TUESDAY)

On Day 6, we'll revisit the theme of the week from a different angle and give you some additional things to think about as you allow God to bring transformation to your life.

### DAY 7: COMMUNITY (WEDNESDAY)

Just when you're needing a little encouragement, Community Day comes along. This is the day when you get together with the other members of your Mission Group. Healthy relationships (with God and with each other) are at the center of all that we're talking about.<sup>8</sup>

# WEEK ONE: BEWARE OF DIVISIONS (Sept 16-22, 1Cor 1:1-17)

## MORNING PRAYER

As we begin our day, spend a few minutes reading Philippians 2:3-8, recognizing Jesus' humility, and praising Jesus for his example. Ask Him to show you his presence today and to lead you in his ways.

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!



## EVENING PRAYER

As we end our day today, confess those times where you went your own way and celebrate those times where you sensed God leading you:

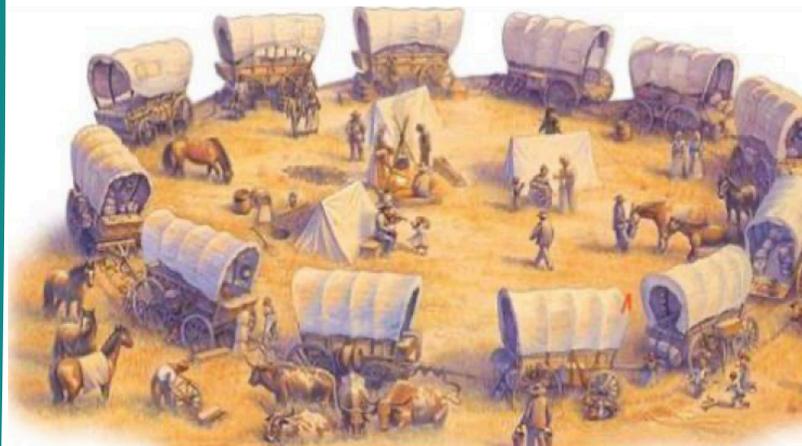
Lord, forgive me for that time today when I... Thank you for Your mercy. But Lord I celebrate the reality that I saw You at work in my life when... Now, Lord, I trust in You for rest tonight. Watch over me.

Listen to "King of Kings" by Hillsong Worship on our series playlist: [bit.ly/1CORseries](http://bit.ly/1CORseries)

1 Corinthians 13:1-2  
If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.



## ARTWORK: CIRCLE THE WAGONS



According to the Collins dictionary to circle the wagons means "to unite with the other people in a group to protect yourselves and fight whoever is attacking you. Epidemics make us circle the wagons, apportion blame, shy from neighbours." "Circle the wagons" is the name of a defensive technique used by early settlers for protection against possible attacks by Indigenous people. This depicts how people defend their views. Instead of being open to discussion and debate, they close themselves off to any people who might hold a different view. This happens in the church as well, where Christians sometimes cling to the false securities of the "good old days". The reaction is the same: "we" circle the wagons, clamp down, batten the hatches, raise the drawbridges against "them".

Of course, Christians need to have strong convictions on the "closed-handed" issues of the faith. However, we must refrain from a "we" versus "them" posture. A circling of the wagons posture. That is not the way to be for and with the world. It is also not the way to maintain Christian unity.

We live in a time that is unlike any other before. Just think of the technological, medical, and educational advances that have occurred over the last 50 years. A unique event that has occurred, caused by these advances, is something called globalization. The world has become one large village in many ways. It has become interconnected. This has had many benefits for both countries and individuals. Suddenly people can travel the world and relocate relatively easily. Consequently, countries have become more diverse. Vancouver is a very clear example of this change. However, for Christianity, diversity is not something new.

One of the things that made Christianity so distinct in the first century was its demographics. All other religions were linked to one's ethnicity. For example, you were born a Jew and therefore you upheld the customs of your people. Sure, there were some converts, but that number was minuscule. Similarly, as a Roman or Greek, you were born into a family who had their household, village, and national gods. The idea that one could choose one's religion without any ethnic ties was unthinkable. Consequently, the early church consisted of converted Jews, Romans, Greeks, Africans etc. from every walk of life. It was ground-breaking at the time and even to this day, this diversity within the church remains revolutionary and unmatched. People from different walks of life, ages, cultures, nationalities, and upbringings come together with a mutual love for one another based on their love for God.

However, with diversity there comes the risk of conflict, especially in the church where people do life together. In the early church, like we will see this week, there were factions caused by differing preferences and convictions which stemmed from their either Jewish or Gentile backgrounds. Today, I believe, there are more opportunities for divisions among Christians than ever before. Therefore, Paul's message to the Corinthian church is extremely relevant for us today.

**ON THE ESSENTIALS, UNITY.  
ON THE  
NON-ESSENTIALS,  
LIBERTY.  
IN EVERYTHING,  
CHARITY.**

**- JACK HYLES**

On January 15, 2010, one year after their crash landing in the Hudson River, the passengers and crew of U.S. Airways Flight 1549 returned to New York for an anniversary celebration. This one dramatic event is all they have in common. After much reminiscing and reconnecting, Lucile Palmer of Brooklyn said, "Being here is so wonderful. We're family now."

Shared experiences, especially traumatic experiences, tend to form bonds between strangers. But families share more than the type of experiences that hit the six-o'clock news. We form substantial bonds with one another when we share life together. Some of it is harrowing, but most of it is rather mundane and ordinary. It is the sharing of our lives, not just experiences, that makes us family.<sup>10</sup>

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## THURSDAY: EXPLORATION NOTES

*What is your background? What culture are you from?*

*What are the things you are most proud of when you think about your culture? Conversely, what are some things you are ashamed of about your culture or its past?*

*How do your background and culture differ from that of others in your congregation?*

*Have a look at the artwork on the previous page (Circling the Wagons). It is a useful analogy for how we sometimes try to protect our views. With that in mind, what are some of those opinions and beliefs you seek to protect like this?*

## FRIDAY: MEDITATION

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.*

The first issue that Paul addresses in the Corinthian church is the disunity among believers. Divisions had formed due to differences of preferred leaders among the people. This passage begins with “I appeal to you”, which is a verb used to describe the father in the parable of the prodigal son as he goes out to reconcile his older son standing defiantly in the courtyard of the family home (Lk 15:28). It is a strong word that indicates a deep desire for reconciliation.

Paul “entreats them” “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is Paul’s strongest theological appeal. He wants them to be of the same “mind” and the same “purpose/intention.” People with differences can work together if they have the same purpose. Paul wants all of them to think along the same lines, and to have a united purpose.

The biblical commentator Kenneth Bailey, having lived for decades in multi-cultural Middle Eastern communities, gives us some helpful insights regarding the issue at hand. He points out that ethnic divisions run deep in the Middle East, even to this day. He states that as far as we know there was no successful “melting pot” ideology in the ancient world.

The city of Corinth was destroyed in 146 b.c. by the Romans for having opposed them, and then in 44 b.c. it was reborn as a Roman colony to facilitate the movement of goods across the isthmus of Corinth and as a center of trade. As a commercial town composed of various ethnic communities, it was thriving in the first century, and the three groups that would have naturally dominated the young Christian community would have been the Romans, the Greeks and the Jews.

Bailey believes that writing to a church in the largest Roman colony in the empire, Paul would have triggered unnecessary hostility in the wider community if he had written, “In our new fellowship, Romans, Greeks and Jews are all equal.” In Corinth, the Romans were inevitably at the top of the pecking order. The town was in Greece, so the Greeks would have been second. As powerless foreigners, the Jews would naturally have been at the bottom of that threesome. Now the issue was that some were fond of Paul, others preferred a leader called Apollos, and still, some others favoured Peter. Paul was a Roman citizen. Apollos was Greek and Paul refers to Peter as “Cephas,” using his Jewish name.

## ONE FRIDAY: MEDITATION

Romans would naturally prefer Roman leadership. Greeks wanted to listen to a native Greek speaker and Jews would naturally lean toward a Jewish leader, especially if he “was from Galilee or Judea” and thereby “from the home country.” Their various ethnic loyalties were quite likely causing serious tension in the church and Paul may well have been referring to those loyalties.<sup>11</sup>

The problem was not the differences in opinions themselves, but the fights these differences were causing. People were bad-mouthing others who didn't hold the same views as themselves. In his address, Paul reminds the church at Corinth that Christianity is not a popularity contest. In other words, he did not come to them to be popular. Rather, he came to introduce them to the story of Jesus, who came to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus is the centrepiece...he is the cornerstone...he is the foundation.

Paul reminds them that God sent him to make this introduction and not to draw attention to himself, who is merely a servant of the King. This first major section of the letter opens with an appeal for unity (1:10–17) and closes with an appeal to imitate Paul, their father in the gospel (4:14–21). Thereby Paul gives a solution to their problem of divisiveness, namely, to imitate him in not only speaking the gospel but living out its message.

## ONE FRIDAY: MEDITATION NOTES

*How do you think Paul felt when he heard the news from Chloe's family? Have you ever been disappointed in such a way?*

*How would you have responded if you were Paul?*

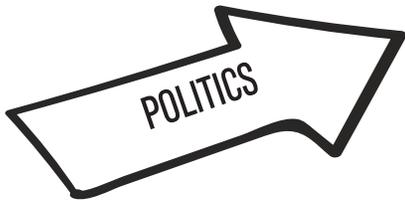
*Why do people have favourites? Is that wrong in itself? Why or why not?*

*What was the root of the issue at Corinth? How would you describe it in your own words?*

# ONE SATURDAY: CHANGE

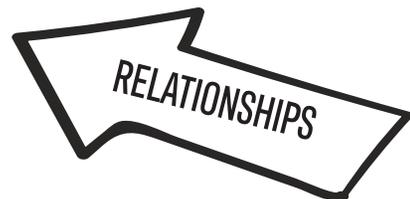
The “Change Day” is aimed at getting serious about what this passage means in your life. We’ve seen that our passage this week is around what occurred at Corinth and why there were divisions. We’ve also seen that these factions ran deep. It had deep cultural roots which caused the divisions to become ugly. Similarly, today we also face differences of opinions in the church that has the potential to cause deep fractions.

Consider the following difficult conversations or dividing issues. Where do you land? How might your theological views differ from others in your congregation?



### Conservative or Liberal (Right or Left)?

We saw this last year with the US elections. Either you must be a conservative or you must be a liberal. Those were the two options social media gave us. No middle ground. This caused conflict among Christians. And social media’s algorithms certainly did not help. Likewise, in Canada political debates are constant. You can hardly watch a YouTube video without being confronted with some politically motivated ad.



**Racial Issues:** Some intentionally seek diversification whilst others are content to restrict their group to people of the same race or with the same cultural roots, whether intentionally or not.

**Sexuality:** Sexuality, and the use of certain pronouns is another contentious issue.

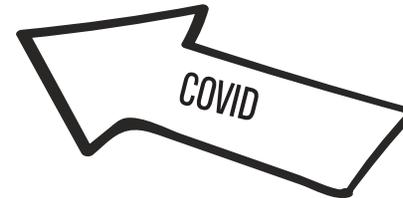
**Global Warming:** The recent fires in B.C. have brought the issue of global warming back onto mainstream media. Some saying we need to listen to the experts and do something about it, whilst others saying that media houses are politically charged and that global warming doesn’t exist.



**Meat or no Meat?** There are more and more documentaries stating that the consumption of meat is not only unnatural for humans but also contributes to the deterioration of the environment. This issue has become a hot topic of debate again.

**Real or Not?** There is no shortage of media coverage on the Coronavirus, which causes fear among people. Likewise, there is no shortage of so-called conspiracy theories either, which causes people to doubt the existence of COVID or at least whether it is as bad as it seems. This is the breeding ground for differences and ultimately divisions.

**Vaccine or no vaccine?** Then there are issues around the vaccines. Some argue that it will produce herd immunity which will bring an end to the potency of the virus which will save millions of lives, whilst others believing that it has not been thoroughly tested yet and is therefore unsafe.



**Masks?** In some places in Canada there are still arguments around the mandatory use of masks. Some saying it’s not a big deal and others saying it’s an impeachment of freedom and cannot be forced upon people.

**Vaccine Requirements?** Moreover, there are disagreements whether a certificate of vaccination should be required to travel or even attend school or university. Some say yes it should be, just like a yellow fever vaccine is necessary before going into Africa, a COVID vaccine should be mandatory to move around freely. Others contend that requiring a certificate of vaccination is an impeachment of our right to freedom.

**Scripture:** Does the Bible have any human error in it?

**Calvinist vs Arminian:** Once saved always saved, or not?



**Mission Alliance vs Gospel Coalition:** Kingdom of God theology or cross theology?

**Complementarian vs Egalitarian:** What’s the role of women in the church?

Now, consider Paul’s words, which is his strongest theological appeal, to lay aside our differences and to pursue our common purpose. Notice how the gospel completely changes the situation. We can journey together with our differences because the one thing that we have in common is the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that we are part of his movement.

Can these (and the many other) differences we have with others be overcome? How can relationships be protected if there are disagreements around these issues?

## John 13:31-35

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. 33 "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

## 1 JOHN 2:7-11

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. 10 Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

## Philippians 2:1-11

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

SEPTEMBER 19

# SERMON NOTES

## MONDAY: ACTION

Sometimes it helps to place yourself in someone else's shoes and to listen to their stories. When we do this, we tend to be more compassionate and understanding.

This week, we'd like you to practice "listening" by spending time with people who normally disagree with you. Choose someone to converse with this week who has different views than you, whether it be on politics, COVID, environmental or theological issues. Be intentional to listen to the person. Put yourself in their positions and try to understand their views.

Above all, see the person God has created in his image that he has called you to love.



- 1) Who joined with Paul in addressing this letter to the Corinthians? (v1)
  - 2) What was one thing the church did not lack in Corinth? (v7)
  - 3) What is the first problem Paul deals with in this epistle? (v10)
  - 4) Who reported this problem to him? (v11)
  - 5) How was their divisiveness expressed? (v12)
  - 6) Who had Paul personally baptized at Corinth? (v14,16)
  - 7) Why was Paul thankful that he had not baptized any other? (v15)
- (ANSWERS IN APPENDIX)

## ONE TUESDAY: CALIBRATION

The Bible has much to say around the issue of unity among believers. Here is a short survey of texts:

Unity among believers pleases God:

Psalm 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

Christians are not supposed to live in isolation:

John 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

Unity includes bearing one another's joys and burdens:

Romans 12:15-16 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Believers must seek unity in all essentials:

1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, t in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Unity ought to be a distinctive mark among Christians:

Philippians 2:1-2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

## ONE TUESDAY: CALIBRATION NOTES

*Why does unity amongst believers please God?*

*How can we be "one" even though we differ on issues?*

*What are some of the essentials believers must agree on to walk together?*

*How should we feel about diversity? Is the love we have for Jesus enough to unify us regardless of our differences?*

# ONE

## WEDNESDAY: COMMUNITY

Just when you're needing a little encouragement, Community Day comes along. This is the day when you get together with the other members of your Mission Group. We want to dedicate this day to preparing for and meeting with your group.

Here are some questions to prepare for tonight. These questions are helpful talking points to discuss with your discipleship partner throughout the week.

*What have you learned this week around our theme?*

*What stood out for you in Sunday's sermon or the Study Guide?*

*What do you think God is saying to you?*

*What does God want you to do?*

*Where have you seen God at work during this last week?*

# TWO

## WEEK TWO: GOD'S FOLLY (SEPT 23-29, 1 COR 1:18-2:5)

### MORNING PRAYER

As we begin our day, spend a few minutes reading John 10:14-18, recognizing Jesus' leadership, and praising Jesus for his faithfulness. Ask Him to show you his presence today and to lead you in his ways.



### 1 Corinthians 13:1-4

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.



### EVENING PRAYER

End your day with a prayer of adoration. Read Psalm 63:1-5.

Examine your day before the Lord. Confess your failures and praise him for your successes.

Listen to "O Come to the Altar" by Elevation Worship on our series playlist: [bit.ly/1CORseries](http://bit.ly/1CORseries)

## ARTWORK: PABLO PICASSO - CRUCIFIXION 1930

The figure of the 'fool' takes us to, perhaps unexpected, a venue: Picasso's art studio. Picasso's aesthetic contribution toward a re-evaluation of the notion of foolishness has become classic, and his painting entitled *Crucifixion* (1930), is a remarkable case in point. The painting is not easy to interpret.



The composition does, however, contain some figures traditionally associated with the crucifixion, such as a small figure (soldier) at the top of the ladder driving in a nail and other soldiers throwing dice on a drumhead for the cloak of Christ (right, below). At the extreme left and right are miniature but empty tau crosses and the bodies of the two thieves crucified with Christ are those fragments lying on the ground. The large object in the upper left-hand corner is perhaps the vinegar-soaked sponge, while the strange and contorted figure standing on the right of the cross has been linked to Mary Magdalene.

The dimensions of irony in this rendition of the crucifixion cannot be mistaken. Broken bodies and limbs lie all around, while the soldiers enjoy their gambling game. The broken figure on the cross is the ash-white colour of death—and glory. The stark black background suggests the apocalyptic night, in which God is both hidden and revealed. A ladder stands up against

the cross, but the Crucified does not come down. He has the power but chooses to be powerless. He is derided, as underlined by the bright palette of yellow and orange, which carries overtones of mockery. The ambiguities cry out to heaven. The Powerful has become powerless. Like a crucified donkey, he remains slain. There are three 'fool' figures in this painting. The first is the artist himself, given his identification with the clown.

Then there is the figure of the Crucified, mocked as a fool, forming the centerpiece of the painting. But there is another fool, the soldier on the horse, pointing his lance at the Crucified (left, middle), at first glance looks like a picador, reminiscent of Spanish bullfights. But we perceive an allusion here to Don Quixote, the ultimate symbol of irony and parody, galloping on his horse and charging with his lance toward monsters that are windmills (and therefore innocent). The appearance of Don Quixote, the laughable fool, turns the drama of the cross into a parody for the cruel, mocking soldiers—and possibly for the viewers of the painting as well.

But maybe it is not surprising that the figure of Don Quixote, the "Knight of the Sorrowful Face," the determined opponent of all injustice, appears on the scene of the crucifixion of the "man of sorrows" (Isa 53:3), whose death is the ultimate injustice. Maybe it is not surprising that Don Quixote, who possesses a kind of "double vision" and foolishly sees glory and beauty in the ugliness of life, appears on the scene of the crucifixion of the one who is ironically and parodically glorified on the cross. Maybe in this instance parody and truth are inseparable. Picasso, as a Spaniard, would have fully understood the parody embodied in the figure of Don Quixote, who appears in other works by the artist. Through parody, Don Quixote reveals the lies underlying the many books and stories about the knights, but also the social and literary practices of his times. Don Quixote mocked and was mocked; he laughed and was laughed at—and in this way, he conquered: "His greatest attribute was that he was mocked and conquered: for being conquered was his way of conquering; he mastered the world by giving the world cause to laugh at him." Picasso understood this art of parodying for truth.

One is reminded of his famous saying: Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth. Picasso, the clown-artist, depicts the lies that led to the crucifixion in such a vivid and gruesome manner that we are disturbed and prompted to look deeper, to see more, and to discover (fragments of) the truth that has been before us all the time—in plain sight. Picasso the fool discerns and portrays the aesthetics of ugliness—which many would call a lie—in such a way that the truth is uncovered. In the ugliness of his *Crucifixion* lies the beauty of God. And that is no lie. For us, the figure of Don Quixote represents the preaching fool who points toward the Crucified.<sup>12</sup>

We know that between the first and fourth century A.D. Christians faced tremendous persecution. Most of the 11 disciples were martyred for their faith. Likewise, countless of their followers paid with their lives for following 'the Way'. They were ostracized, beaten, bruised, and killed for pledging allegiance to a King that was not Caesar. It was only in 313 A.D. when Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan that Christianity was officially accepted by the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, it was not only in Rome but throughout the world, Christians have suffered similar circumstances through the ages.

Living in the West in the 21st Century has its challenges for the Christian. But instead of being persecuted physically, we are often mistreated emotionally. This happens through exclusion, mockery, and being shifted to the margins, or challenging their intelligence. We think of Richard Dawkins who said that "I am against religion because it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world". Or another, "Too stupid to understand science? Try religion!". Or "When one person is delusional it's called insanity. When many people are delusional, they call it religion". These are the types of statements made about Christians today which, for someone who grew up in the West, are offensive. We too want to be seen as intelligent, thoughtful and educated.

But, again, Paul's message to the Corinthians is so relevant for us. He addresses the disunity issue, we considered last week, by confronting human arrogance. Especially, the arrogance of thinking we know everything. He does this by reminding the church of the wisdom and intelligence of God as opposed to that of the world. And shows how the wisdom of God destroys the wisdom of the wise and how God frustrates the intelligence of the intelligent. Paul points out that God has made the wisdom of this world foolish by using a foolish message to save those who believe. He did this because the 'wisdom' of this world did not acknowledge him. Now, this message was about the crucified Messiah, a paradoxical and unthinkable concept, yet he highlights that it is exactly through this simple even foolish message, that God breaks down the arrogance of humanity to deal with the human heart. In this, the wisdom of God, a different type of wisdom to that of the world, is wiser than human wisdom.

**THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE  
BEGINNING OF WISDOM; ALL  
WHO FOLLOW HIS PRECEPTS HAVE  
GOOD UNDERSTANDING.  
TO HIM BELONGS ETERNAL PRAISE.  
- PSALM 111:10**

Research has confirmed what students of the Bible already knew. A study conducted by the University of Michigan psychology department found that older people seem to know how to deal with conflicts and accept life's uncertainties better than younger people. The results indicate the difference is not so much determined by how many facts a person knows, but is instead related to what could be termed "social wisdom."

People aged 60 or older are generally more likely than those aged 25-40 or 41-59 to try to find ways to handle conflict, to see multiple points of view, to be more interested in compromise, and to be willing to acknowledge there might be things about a difficult situation they don't know. Professor Richard Nisbett, who led the project, said, "I hope our results will encourage people to assume that older people may have something to contribute to thinking about social problems." By the way, Professor Nisbett is 68.<sup>13</sup>

## TWO THURSDAY: EXPLORATION NOTES

*How have you encountered persecution before? How was it different from that which the early church experienced?*

*What is meant by "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"?*

*Why do older people generally handle conflict better? Can you think of an example of this? What can you learn from that person?*

## TWO FRIDAY: MEDITATION

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5.*

N.T. Wright points out that when Paul came into a pagan city and stood up to speak about Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified by the Romans but raised from the dead by God, and who was now the Lord of the world, summoning people to faithful obedience, he knew what people would think. This was, and is, the craziest message anybody could imagine. This wasn't a smart new philosophy; it was madness. It wasn't an appeal to high culture. It was news of an executed criminal from a despised race.

When he announced his message about Jesus, when he stood up in the synagogue or the marketplace or the debating chamber, he didn't use clever words to trick people into thinking they believed it because they enjoyed his speaking style. The cross had to do its work. Simply telling the story released the power of quite a different sort from any power that human speech could have: God's power! Besides which all human power looks weak, God's wisdom, besides which all human learning looks like folly.

Paul says it the other way round, to make his effect: God's folly is wiser than humans, and God's weakness is stronger than humans! As Wright reminds us, the Christian good news is all about God dying on a rubbish-heap at the wrong end of the Empire. It's all about God babbling nonsense to a room full of philosophers. It's all about the true God confronting the world of posturing, power, and prestige, and overthrowing it to set up his kingdom, a kingdom in which the weak and the foolish find themselves just as welcome as the strong and the wise, if not more so. Think back to Jesus himself, and the people he befriended, and ask yourself whether Paul is not being utterly loyal to his master.<sup>14</sup> This reminder of the way of the kingdom of God is how Paul seeks to address the arrogance in the Corinthian church that lies at the root of these divisions. An arrogance that flies in the face of what the church should be about, namely, follow their Lord in the way of the cross.

Kenneth Bailey contends that the negative side of "boasting" for Paul was the attitude of "self-confidence which seeks glory before God and which relies upon itself." The Roman could boast of the power of the empire. The Greeks could boast of the greatness of Greek civilization. The Jew could boast in the covenant, the patriarchs, the law and much more. But for Paul, the power and wisdom of the cross made all such boasting meaningless. God chose to save through weak things (the incarnation and the cross) so that no one could boast in his presence. Paul hopes that by reminding the church of this, he might stop their fighting regarding which leaders they boasted in.<sup>15</sup>

## TWO FRIDAY: MEDITATION NOTES

*What are some of the main areas in which the wisdom of God differs from the wisdom of this world? Why is God's wisdom better than the world's wisdom?*

*In what ways did God choose to save through the "weak things"?*

*What are the effects of God's power in speech? Have you ever encountered such power? If so, how would you describe it? Would you recognize it if you heard it again?*

*Does this passage mean we shouldn't have any wisdom of our own?*

## TWO SATURDAY: CHANGE



We've seen that our passage this week is around the wisdom of God over against that of the world. Paul is not in any way saying that we shouldn't use our minds or intellects but is challenging the type of intelligence that boasts in itself rather than in God. It is this type of posture that causes divisions.



Rather, he reminds us that we should use different lenses through which we view the world. These should be the kingdom of God lenses. It is Jesus who "has become for us wisdom from God".

Therefore, how we maintain unity amongst fellow Christians is not by being unintelligent or by agreeing on everything, but rather by following the way of the foot-washing Christ, the crucified Messiah.



Jesus demonstrated the way we are to walk. But this way is the way of the cross. The way of dying to self...of placing others ahead of yourself and serving rather than being served. This is the way the victory of Jesus on the cross gets implemented in this world. Would our non-Christian friends agree with this mindset? No, they won't...However, it is precisely in this way of living that true joy, peace, and purpose are found.



## TWO SATURDAY: CHANGE NOTES

*Through what lenses should you view the world?*

*What does the way of the foot-washing Christ look like in your circumstances? Think especially in terms of your relationships.*

*What is the benefit of living this sort of life? Why would you put yourself in a position that seeks the flourishing of those around you more than your own?*

*Why does Jesus want us to pick up our crosses and follow him? Is there another way?*

## TWO SUNDAY: COMMUNION

### Job 38:1-21

“Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

2 “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? 3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. 4 “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels j shouted for joy? 8 “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt’?

12 “Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, 13 that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? 14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. 15 The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken. 16 “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness?

18 Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. 19 “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? 20 Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? 21 Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!

Science explains the how and when, but Theology explains who and why. Continue reading Job chapters 38 and 39 in your Bible.

SEPTEMBER 26

# SERMON NOTES

TWO  
MONDAY: ACTION

Spend some time today in a shopping mall, a downtown café, or a coffee shop that overlooks a busy crosswalk, a popular park, or a college campus area. Simply sit still and look at the faces that go past you. Imagine some of the things that might make up their life stories: sadness, abuse, abandonment, broken relationships, sexual mistakes, unemployment fears, lack of purpose, broken marriages, deep debt, bankruptcy, loneliness, despair, pressure to measure up, desire for community, searching for God, parents who haven't understood or cared for their children well.

Pray for them. Also, ask God to give you his eyes to see.



- 1) In what two ways do people view the preaching of the cross? (18)
  - 2) How did the preaching of Christ crucified appear to the Jews and the Greeks? (23)
  - 3) How has God chosen to confound the wise of this world? (27-28)
    - 4) On what grounds may we boast? (31)
  - 5) How does Paul describe his preaching among them? (1-2)
    - 6) How does Paul describe his feelings among them? (3)
    - 7) What accompanied Paul as he preached the gospel? (4)
- (ANSWERS IN APPENDIX)

## TWO TUESDAY: CALIBRATION

Science and religion are two sides of the same deep human impulse to understand the world, to know our place in it, and to marvel at the wonder of life and the infinite cosmos we are surrounded by. Let's keep them that way, and not let one attempt to usurp the role of the other.

The quote above is from an encouraging *Time Magazine* article. Read the whole article here: [time.com/77676/why-science-does-not-disprove-god](http://time.com/77676/why-science-does-not-disprove-god)

*What is the relationship between Theology and Science? Is it a matter of either-or, or both and?*

*What questions do Theology seek to answer? Was it written to tell us about God's story and our role within it, or an encyclopedia to explain all the workings of the universe?*

*What questions are Science most interested in? Can it prove or disprove everything in life (for example the existence of love)?*

*What are the limitations of Science? Why can it never disprove God?*

## TWO WEDNESDAY: COMMUNITY

Just when you're needing a little encouragement, Community Day comes along. This is the day when you get together with the other members of your Mission Group. We want to dedicate this day to preparing for and meeting with your group.

Here are some questions to prepare for tonight. These questions are helpful talking points to discuss with your discipleship partner throughout the week.

*What have you learned this week around our theme?*

*What stood out for you in Sunday's sermon or in the Study Guide?*

*What do you think God is saying to you?*

*What does God want you to do?*

*Where have you seen God at work during this last week?*

# WEEK THREE: MATURITY (SEPT 30-OCT 6, 1 COR 2:6-3:4)



## MORNING PRAYER

As we begin our day, spend a few minutes praying, with David, the words in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13. Praise God for who he is and for what he has done for us. Ask that he be honoured through your life today. Declare your dependence upon him today.



## MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

## EVENING PRAYER

More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us.

Pray through this version of the Daily Examen.



**1. Become aware of God's presence.** Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

**2. Review the day with gratitude.** Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures.

**3. Reflect on how God showed Himself to you.** God reveals Himself through Scripture, but we also see glimpses of Him in nature, events, and people. Sometimes God shows up loudly through miraculous intervention. Other times He shows Himself quietly through the beauty of a flower or a conversation. As you look back at your day, can you identify moments where you sensed God's revelation or intervention?

**4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.** Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

**5. Look toward tomorrow.** Ask God to give you grace for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.<sup>16</sup>

Listen to "God of This City" by Chris Tomlin on our series playlist: [bit.ly/1CORseries](https://bit.ly/1CORseries)

## ARTWORK: CRUCIFIXION – ANGOLA, NORTHWESTERN REGION 17th CE.

Another depiction of the “foolishness” of the cross takes us to the continent of Africa, where the cross comes into contact with African notions of power. The idea of a vulnerable God, at least in the conventional sense of the word, seems to stand in stark contrast to certain African concepts of God linked to *Amandla*, which means “power” or “energy” or “life force.”

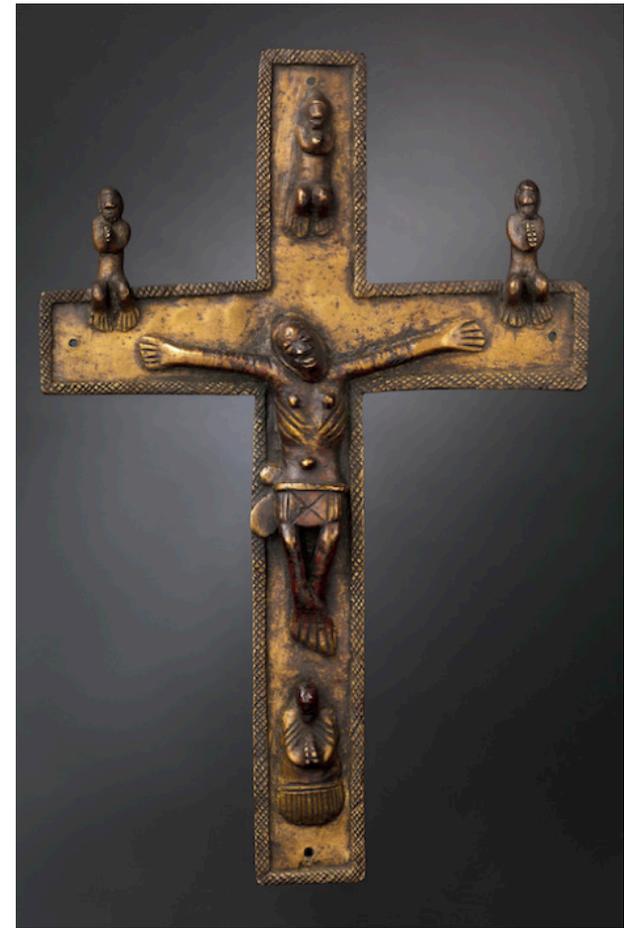
Traditional African art, which often seeks to encapsulate power, can be used as a power tool or magic charm against one’s enemies and for one’s well-being. An example of this kind of art can be seen in the crucifix dating from the early seventeenth century, found in what is today Angola.

This work of art is aesthetically and symbolically rich in detail. How the crucifix has been assimilated into local idioms is extraordinary. Christ’s features, particularly his hair, suggest those of a Kongolese person. His flattened hands and feet, with the feet, joined into a single five-toed limb, represent Kongo gestures associated with heightened spiritual power. The large, protruding oval eyes, another common Kongo art motif, represent the supernatural vision of one possessed by an ancestor or god.

Below Christ and above his shoulders are small, praying figures, which possibly depict ancestors, angels, mourners, or saints. Believed to have spiritual authority and power, including magical protective properties, the cross was acculturated into Kongo ancestral cults and burial rituals and was used to intervene in matters such as illness, fertility, and drought.

The cross is thus intertwined with the search for magical power; it becomes a tool for, and of, power, a kind of amulet that can ward off evil. Such an understanding of the cross seems at first glance to be far removed from a God who sides in solidarity with suffering humanity, who is a vulnerable, broken, and mocked donkey-God. But perhaps this fascinating, magic-like amulet takes us to a deep and profound reality of the cross.

The crucifix stresses in a non-Western fashion the power of the cross, which is often lost in Western emphases on suffering, sacrifice, and weakness. In this depiction, the cross is truly an object of power. The power to ward off evil is here precisely the power of the Crucified One. And such an affirmation lies at the heart of the proclamation of the gospel: on the cross, Jesus overcomes the “evil one.” While the connection with magical power may trouble many Western Christians, the affirmation of the power of the cross over evil remains a central Christian affirmation, however, it is conceptualized.



Whether intended consciously or not, the crucifix may represent an African depiction of Christ as a kind of holy fool, who powerfully overcomes the evil one by taking the brunt of that evil on himself.

The crucifix thus invites Western believers to ponder new understandings of power, powerlessness, and folly at the heart of the cross. We are touching here upon some of the most profound dimensions of the figure of the fool: he or she is laughed at and ridiculed (as a stupid, or delightful, donkey), sought after (as a lucky charm), and blamed for our guilt (as a scapegoat). The fool is simultaneously an entertainer, source of comfort and security, and so close to the truth that we need to get rid of him or her—delighter, deliverer, disturber, all in one. So, we cannot live with them, cannot live without them. We love them, hate them, applaud them, crucify them.<sup>17</sup>

**THE TRUE TEST OF A MAN'S  
SPIRITUALITY IS NOT  
HIS ABILITY TO SPEAK, AS WE ARE APT  
TO THINK,  
BUT RATHER HIS  
ABILITY TO  
BRIDLE HIS TONGUE.**  
- KENT HUGHES

A 2010 study by Canadian psychologists found that people who purchase environmentally friendly items feel a “moral glow” that makes them more likely to cheat and act selfishly elsewhere in their lives. In the study, which was a computer game, subjects rewarded themselves with money based on certain results.

“Green” consumers were more likely to lie about test results so that they could make more money. The explanation for this is that acting virtuously in one area seems to make people feel they have earned “credit,” and now they have a license to act unethically and selfishly in other parts of their lives. Our lives are to be an open book before the Lord. Because we are righteous in one area doesn't give us a license to fail to live for God's glory in every other area.<sup>18</sup>

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics concluded recently. During this Games we saw some of the world's best athletes in action.. They've trained probably for most of their lives to have a shot at winning the gold medal in their event.

Have you ever wondered how at every Olympic Games, world records keep getting get broken? Well, nutrition plays a large role in this. According to Arj Thiruchelvam (a UK Athletics Sprint and Jumps Coach) “A few simple principles can help us all live healthier lives but, when 0.2 seconds makes all the difference between first and last place, the science behind athlete nutrition is understandably more complex.”<sup>19</sup>

They have to consume a certain amount of calories per day, which consists of a specific amount of carbs, proteins, and fats. This means food must be weighed and logged, and their bodies' responses closely monitored. No wonder world records keep tumbling. To be at their very best as athletes they must have a goal (the gold medal), practices that will help them reach that goal (training and nutrition), support (their coach), and they have to constantly be monitoring their progress to make adjustments where needed to reach their goal.

This sounds a bit like Paul who writes, “ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I will not be disqualified for the prize.” 1 Co 9:24–27 In the Christian life, we also need a goal, a vision, a prize: something to work towards.

Our goal is to become like Jesus: to live like a restored, redeemed people by becoming the image-bearers God intended us to be. Therefore, we too need to have practices in place like prayer, reading our bibles, spending time with God's people and some of the other shared practices we have at Southside. We also need support, which we receive in community.

Finally, we need to monitor our spiritual progress. As one man said, if we checked our spiritual temperatures as often as we check our weight, we would be a different type of people. One thing that is sure to cause divisions in the church is immaturity. People offend one another in different ways, especially if they do life together. However, the mature will sort out any offences without causing factions.

## THREE THURSDAY: EXPLORATION NOTES

*Have you ever been on such a strict diet or exercise program that has required constant monitoring?*

*When was the last time you sat down and examined your spiritual growth? How can we practically do this?*

*What does it mean to become more "Christlike"? How would you explain it to someone else?*

*How would you describe your level of maturity on a scale of 1 to 10? What are you good at and what needs work?*

## THREE FRIDAY: MEDITATION

*Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4.*

In last week's passage, Paul reminded us that the world has a different type of wisdom from that of God. One that is self-seeking rather than the wisdom that lays down its life for others. Therein lies the power of God, which is foolishness to the world. Now, this week Paul continues with this theme of wisdom to address the disunity among the believers at Corinth. He reminds them that, yes, there is much wisdom within the Christian faith.

There are deep, rich, multi-sided insights into God, ourselves, the world and our role in it, that are breath-taking. This type of wisdom has been hidden in the past, but now that the new creation has started, it has been revealed. This was accomplished by the fate and resurrection of Jesus who "turned the wheel of history", as Albert Schweitzer put it. Part of this new creation was the coming of the Spirit. No longer would the Spirit of God only come upon certain people for a limited time, like in the Old Testament, but he would come upon every son and daughter of God, and remain. He would make his abode with the people of God.

Paul reminds the church that who can know the thoughts of a person better than the spirit (the inner soul) of that person? Therefore, because we have the Spirit of God under this New Covenant, we have access to wells of wisdom that the rulers of this world can only dream about. He says, when it comes to this type of wisdom, the eye has not seen, ear has not heard and the human mind has not imagined.

N.T Wright puts it like this, "Wisdom, it turns out, is not just intellectual information, or even the elegance and beauty of abstract theories; it blossoms like a garden, flows like a mighty river, satisfies human beings at every level in ways we can't even guess at the moment. That is what God has in mind for those who love him."<sup>20</sup>

There is a wealth of knowledge and life-enhancing understanding waiting for us to explore. Christianity is not simply a set of beliefs and a rule-book for life, that you could master in a weekend. It is as many-sided as the world itself, full of beauty, mystery, power, and as terrifying and wonderful as God himself. There is always much, much more to learn, to relish, to delight in. But it's these things that God has revealed to us by his Spirit. They are spiritual realities that the Spirit has revealed that greatly affect present realities. But, Paul makes it clear that it

# THREE

## FRIDAY: MEDITATION

is only those who are “spiritual” who can perceive this. That the person without the Spirit cannot accept the things that come from the Spirit and therefore they are foolishness to him.

Wright shows that the word he uses for “merely human” could be translated as ‘soulish’ as opposed to ‘spiritual’. This means someone who is directed and led simply by the ordinary human interior life (soul) rather than by the fresh, gospel-driven wisdom or energy given by God’s spirit.<sup>21</sup> However, we as Christians can perceive these things because we have the mind of the Messiah, through the Spirit.

If that is true, there is no depth of wisdom too deep, no height too high, for us to explore. Bailey points out that Paul had just told the Corinthians that “among the mature” he was able to present the “deep things of God.” They thought that they, above others, were profoundly ready for those deep things. But they did not yet qualify.<sup>22</sup>

Now, the reason Paul cannot share these deep, rich, mind-blowing truths with the Corinthian church is that they are still worldly...they are still infants in Christ. Therefore, they constantly need milk rather than solid food. He cannot give them more substantial teaching because they are not ready for it. That would be throwing your pearls to the pigs. Some things in life can only be thoroughly appreciated when a certain level of maturity is reached.

You don’t throw the car keys at your 10-year-old son, nor do you let your daughter get married at 8. At this point in the letter, some might have disagreed with Paul regarding his assessment of their maturity. However, he points out that their immaturity is reflected in their quarreling with each other...revealing their worldliness.

# THREE

## FRIDAY: MEDITATION NOTES

*Have you ever been amazed at something you read in the Bible or teaching you listened to? What was it about?*

*What is the role of the Spirit in revealing the truth to us? What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?*

*How would a “spiritual” person have reacted in Corinth? In other words, how would a spiritual person’s conduct have differed from that of a worldly person?*

*Is quarreling always a form of immaturity? When would it be appropriate behaviour?*

# SATURDAY: CHANGE

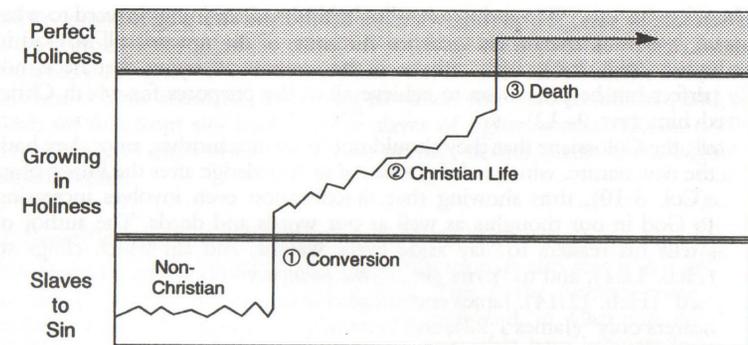
When was the last time you examined your spiritual condition? How are you doing spiritually? Or, as a friend asked me recently, how is your soul? These are questions we need to consider often. In our passage this week it is clear that one of the underlying issues at Corinth was immaturity.



A marker for this is that the church seemed to be worldly in many ways. Their disunity and fighting revealed this assumption. Therefore, Paul was hesitant to share some deeper teachings with them. He believed that they weren't ready to digest it.

To avoid following in Corinth's footsteps, we need to ask ourselves, are we being worldly in certain areas? How is that manifesting itself? Could it lead to factions in the church?

It seems that one sure way to avoid issues within the church is to pursue maturity. The pursuit of maturity, or holiness, or Christ-likeness (however you want to put it) is an essential part of what Christianity is about. It's not only important what we do for God, but who we become in the process. This is a truth that is often placed on the peripheral. But, Paul reminds us in Romans 8:29, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." American Systematic Theologian Wayne Grudem provides this graph to explain this process of 'sanctification':<sup>23</sup>



# SATURDAY: CHANGE NOTES

*How is your soul? How would you describe your current spiritual condition?*

*What can you do about it?*

*Does Christian maturity mean you have to get things right all the time? Why not?*

*Describe the worldly way vs the spiritual (mature) way to deal with these differences:*

- a. *Political differences*
- b. *COVID differences*
- c. *Environmental differences*
- d. *Theological differences*

## James 1:4

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

## Hebrews 6:1-3

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, a and of faith in God, 2 instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

3 And God permitting, we will do so.

## Luke 8:11-15

This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

## Ephesians 4:11-16

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

## Philippians 3:15-16

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

## Colossians 1:28-29

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

OCTOBER 3

# SERMON NOTES

## THREE MONDAY: ACTION

Bless one person who probably doesn't share your views on things, without any strings attached and without trying to talk about God or getting any acknowledgment.

It's a sign of maturity if we can bless someone regardless of how we feel about their views.

Reflect on how your heart felt. What if you could live a life of blessing? How might you be different? How might it develop street credibility if every Christian lived this way?



- 1) What six phrases in verses 9-13 help to explain the process by which the hidden mystery of God was made known?
  - 2) What phrase teaches the concept of "verbal inspiration"? (13)
  - 3) What is said about the "natural" man? (14)
  - 4) What is said about the "spiritual" man? (15-16)
  - 5) What prevented Paul from speaking to the Corinthians as spiritual people? (1-3)
  - 6) What manifested their worldliness? (3-4)
- (ANSWERS IN APPENDIX)

# THREE

## TUESDAY: CALIBRATION

Sometimes, slight conflict leads to deeper divisions because we don't know what to do with it. Handling conflict in a mature manner will avoid such unnecessary factions. Here are some tips for managing conflict:<sup>24</sup>

**Accept conflict.** Remember that conflict is natural and happens in every ongoing relationship. Since conflict is unavoidable we must learn to manage it. Conflict is a sign of a need for change and an opportunity for growth, new understanding, and improved communication. Conflict cannot be resolved unless it is addressed with the appropriate individual(s).

**Be a calming agent.** Regardless of whether you are being a sounding board for a friend or you are dealing with your conflict, your response to the conflict can escalate or decrease the intensity of the problem. To be calming, provide an objective or neutral point of view. Help plan how you are going to work with the other party to achieve resolution.

**Listen actively.** Work through how you feel, what the specific problem is and what impact it is having on you. Use I -based statements to help do this :

- I feel (strongest feeling)
- When you (objective description of the behaviour)
- Because (specific impact or consequences)
- I would like (what you want the person to do to prevent the problem )

**Analyze the conflict.** This will help clarify the specific problem. Some questions that you may ask are:

- What triggered the conflict?
- Who are you angry with?
- What are you not getting that you want?
- What are you afraid of losing?
- Is your conflict/anger accurate or exaggerated?
- How can your conflict be resolved?

**Model neutral language.** When people conflict they use inflammatory language such as profanity, name-calling, and exaggerations that escalate the conflict. Restate inflammatory language in a more objective way to help make the information less emotionally laden and more useful for future discussions.

**Separate the person from the problem.** View the problem as a specific behaviour or set of circumstances rather than attributing negative feelings to the whole person. This approach makes the problem more manageable and hopeful than deciding you "can't stand" this person any longer.

**Work together.** This requires that each person stop placing blame and take ownership of the problem. Commit to work together and listen to each other to solve the conflict.

**Agree to disagree.** Each person has a unique point of view and rarely agrees on every detail. Being right is not what is important. Place yourself in the others' shoes.

**Focus on the future.** In conflict, we tend to remember every single thing that ever bothered us about that person. People in conflict need to vent about the past but they often dwell on the past. Often the best way to take ownership of the problem is to recognize that regardless of the past, you need to create a plan to address the present conflict and those that may arise in the future.

**Be creative.** Finding a resolution to the problem that satisfies everyone requires creativity and hard work. Be careful not to give in simply to avoid conflict or maintain harmony. Agreements reached too early usually do not last. Generate silly options to begin thinking "outside of the box."

**Be specific.** For example, if you are using a roommate agreement to facilitate the discussion make sure that everyone fully understands each point that is written down. Clarify ambiguous terms that each person may interpret differently.



## TUESDAY: CALIBRATION NOTES

*How would you rate your conflict resolution skills on a scale of 1 to 10? What are you good at and what needs work?*

*What is the role of listening in conflict resolution?*

*Have you ever heard of these "I-based statements"? What are the positives and negatives of this?*

*What stands out for you in this article? Is there something specific you would like to apply going forward?*

## WEDNESDAY: COMMUNITY

Just when you're needing a little encouragement, Community Day comes along. This is the day when you get together with the other members of your Mission Group. We want to dedicate this day to preparing for and meeting with your group.

Here are some questions to prepare for tonight. These questions are helpful talking points to discuss with your discipleship partner throughout the week.

*What have you learned this week around our theme?*

*What stood out for you in Sunday's sermon or in the Study Guide?*

*What do you think God is saying to you?*

*What does God want you to do?*

*Where have you seen God at work during this last week?*

# FOUR

## WEEK FOUR: FOOLS FOR CHRIST (OCT 7-13, 1 COR 3:5-4:13)

### MORNING PRAYER

As we begin our day, spend a few minutes reading Isaiah 41:8-10. Ask him to show you his presence today and to lead you to accomplish his will. Pray for his strength and help today.

8 “But you, Israel, my servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
you descendants of Abraham my friend,  
9 I took you from the ends of the earth,  
from its farthest corners I called you.  
I said, ‘You are my servant’;  
I have chosen you and have not rejected you.

10 So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”



### EVENING PRAYER

Our practice is that we end each day focused on Jesus and the work that He has done in and through us.

- **Inward:** Where did you see God at work in your life today? What did you hear Him say? Thank Him for at least 5 things each day. Feel free to use the space here to keep a list.
- **Outward:** Pray through the 2020/2021 Prayer Priorities (Find that attached at the end of this booklet) as you feel led.
- **Upward:** Pray a contemplative prayer through having a 1 minute moment of silence before the Lord. This is a moment to sit with a posture of a loving attentiveness to God.

Listen to “Captain” by United on our series playlist: [bit.ly/1CORseries](https://bit.ly/1CORseries)



### MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 13:1-11

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.  
2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

## ARTWORK: ALEXAMENOS GRAFFITO, PALATINE HILL, ROME 238AD

Although almost two thousand years old, a remarkable parody from early Christianity called the *Alexamenos graffito*, or *graffito blasfemo* (ca. 238–244), still captures our imagination today. It was carved in the plaster of a wall near the Palatine Hill in Rome and can be seen now in the Palatine Antiquarium Museum.

It seems to have been created in the quarters of the imperial pageboys, a boarding school called *Paedagogium*. In the depiction, one of the boys, obviously a Christian, is being mocked by another boy, or by a group of his schoolfellows, using parody.

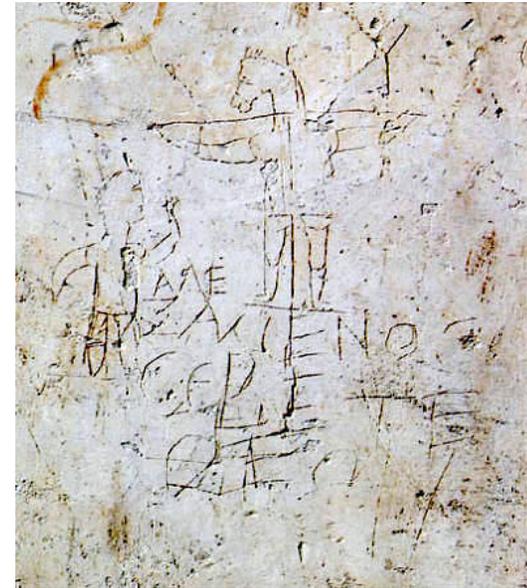
The provocative parody shows a man with a donkey's head being crucified on a tau cross. In front of the cross stands a young man—presumably Alexamenos—raising his hand as if in prayer. Across the picture, written in broad, childlike strokes are the words *Alexamenos worships his God*.

The Christian boy, Alexamenos, held onto his beliefs, for another inscription close by reads: Alexamenos is faithful (*Alexamenos Fidelis*). It is not clear whether Alexamenos wrote these words himself as a response to the mocking graffito, or whether another boy took sides with him.

One could ask: Why specifically a donkey? The donkey played a significant role in antiquity, especially as a metaphor used by classical authors. The depictions of the donkey are paradoxical. On the one hand, it is applauded for its endurance in doing hard work economically, but on the other, it is slandered for its sloth and stupidity. Over time, however, it was the foolishness of the donkey that became its most prominent trait.

The donkey became the standard metaphor for stupidity and foolishness in classical antiquity. Cicero, for instance, calls Calpurnius Piso a donkey, someone not capable of being taught letters, and not in need of words, but rather fists or sticks.

Juvenal even talks about a stupid person as a two-legged donkey. This metaphor of the stupid, two-legged donkey (just like the one in the Alexamenos graffito) carried with it unmistakable overtones of mockery and became a sign of foolishness.



The donkey also played an interesting—and paradoxical—role in Christianity. From the earliest centuries of Christianity, there was a tradition claiming that Joseph and Mary fled with the Child to Egypt on a donkey, although this detail is never indicated in the Bible. The donkey was venerated for many generations as a vehicle of salvation.

In short, the connection between a crucified God and a donkey expressed strikingly the folly of the cross. In the Hellenistic world, with its adoration of the good, the true, and the beautiful, such a view of the divine would have been vehemently rejected as a distorted form of aesthetics, an aesthetics of the repulsive. The forms of Greek beauty simply cannot portray the agony and torments of the crucifixion. Conventional aesthetics of beauty cannot fathom or endure the aesthetics of the crucified donkey.

Such a strange gospel, in which the weakness of the cross and not a conventional, powerful God takes the central place, can be described as absurd and ludicrous. This gospel can become a stumbling block, a scandal, to many, as Paul indicated in his first letter to the Corinthians.<sup>25</sup>

We recently bought our 8-year-old son a skateboard. He seems to have some talent with this...well, at least more than his dad. He has been going down small hills that I would be scared stiff to even try. The other day, he asked me whether I think he's going to become so good at skateboarding that he will become famous.

My automatic response was, what's so good about being famous? But when I think back to my childhood, I also wanted to be famous. I wanted to be a professional cricket player. How many of us can testify to that same ideal? This is normal, yet I wonder if it is healthy. From a small age, we place others on pedestals and desire to be placed on pedestals ourselves. One reason behind this is to feel important. To feel like we stand out and ultimately we believe the illusion that fame brings happiness. Well, one only needs to open a newspaper to see that this is not the case.

One of the most striking things about Jesus' story in the gospels, is his unwavering commitment to avoid fame. In the TV series, *The Chosen*, Nicodemus asks Mary of Magdala, whom Jesus healed, what type of man is he who performs miracles yet does not take credit for it? How different, how counter-cultural, how counter-Rome.

N.T. Wright points out that Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was all about his vocation as the messiah. Would he be the messiah that everyone expected and longed for? The powerful, militant, popular messiah? Or would he take the form of a servant? Would he establish his kingdom through revolutionary zeal, or would he plant a mustard seed and have that grow behind the scenes into a kingdom that the world has never seen?

He chose to take the form of a servant...a foot-washer...a cross...so that God's kingdom would be inaugurated on earth and implemented further by his disciples. This is the way of Jesus: the way he wants his followers to live. Not pursuing fortune and fame, but pursuing the good of others.

The only pedestal Jesus accepted was on Calvary. He would not be paraded like Roman Generals. Rather he would enter Jerusalem, at the climax of his career, on the back of a donkey.



**THE FRUIT OF WISDOM  
IS CHRISTLIKENESS, PEACE,  
HUMILITY AND LOVE.  
AND, THE ROOT OF IT IS  
FAITH IN CHRIST  
AS THE MANIFESTED WISDOM OF GOD.  
- JI PACKER**

In an article for the *New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell writes that vicious dogs are often not inherently vicious, but are the product of their owners: "The dogs that bite people are, in many cases, socially isolated because their owners are socially isolated, and they are vicious because they have owners who want a vicious dog.

The junkyard German shepherd—which looks as if it would rip your throat out—and the German shepherd guide dog are the same breed. But they are not the same dog, because they have owners with different intentions."<sup>26</sup> Like these dogs, Christians have a master we should look to for how to act. Jesus is our master and we should reflect his character.

## FOUR THURSDAY: EXPLORATION NOTES

*What were your aspirations when you were 8 years old? Was it also to be famous?*

*Why do you think people naturally pursue fame?*

*If you were in Jesus' shoes, what type of messiah would you have been?*

*Can you think of some occurrences where Jesus walked away from popularity? Name the times he took a posture of humility when he could have bathed in praise.*

## FOUR FRIDAY: MEDITATION

*Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-4:13.*

Nowadays there is a joke, 'what is the difference between a philosophy degree and a pizza? Well, the pizza can feed a family of four'. This joke implies that it's hard to make a living as a philosopher in our day and age. That they are not valued by society and therefore they are not financially rewarded for their contribution. But, in Paul's day, particularly at Corinth, people loved their philosophers...They had their Stoics, Cynics, Epicureans and they valued them highly. Consequently, public debate, winning arguments and specialized oratory became the order of the day.

Unlike the popular philosophers, Paul reminds the church at Corinth that these leaders they are fighting over are not the heroes of the story. They are merely servants who are serving God themselves. Therefore, they (Paul, Apollos, Cephas) are only playing their small parts in God's narrative. It is the Lord that is the hero of the story because it is he who brings the growth.

Paul hints at something else also in this passage, namely, God is his judge. He points out that he will not participate in their popularity contest...he will not be paraded like their philosophers and judged by the people. Rather, he serves God who will judge his work and reward him accordingly. He, therefore, urges them to regard their teachers as servants of God, each doing his bit. And, rather than placing them on a pedestal and fighting over who is the best, they should remember that God is their judge. It is only God who can see someone's motives and make a fair judgment.

But Paul is not done with the quarreling issue, which stemmed from their arrogance. He contends that the church is the Temple of God and whoever seeks to sow disunity is destroying the Temple of God. Likewise, he reminds them that they entered this world with nothing.

Everything that they have, they have received from the Lord's hand. Paul's strategy is quite simple. If they can see that they are recipients of grace, they might humble themselves and stop the fighting.

Therefore, he states that they should become fools for Christ...following the way of the crucified Messiah and stop their boasting. In a sense he is asking the Christians at Corinth, 'do we or don't we follow a crucified Messiah?'

Paul finishes his argument by using contrast. The contrast between the world's wisdom and God's wisdom. Between the treatment of the popular philosophers and that of the apostles. N.T. Wright shows that in ancient Rome, the Roman generals would return to the city after winning a great victory. They built massive 'triumphal arches', some of which are still there, through which the procession would pass. There was a religious meaning to this: the soldiers needed purifying after all the terrible things they had to do to win the victory, and some believed that a solemn ceremonial procession through the arch would have this effect.

But there was much more going on as well: a public display of glory, power and victory, a great day out for everyone, a celebration of the fact that Rome had triumphed again.

The whole event was called a 'triumph'. In the days before the news media flashed pictures of battles and victories around the world within minutes of their happening, this was how the people back home knew for sure their generals had won the war: they would march in a parade through the streets carrying the spoils they had captured and led a weary gang of prisoners at the back of the procession. Usually, the day would end with the prisoners being killed, or sold into slavery.<sup>27</sup>

What Paul ends with is saying that people treat their philosophers like these generals...but the apostles like the prisoners at the back. The reason is simple, they are representing two different kingdoms. He, therefore, urges the Corinthians, through a bit of sarcasm, to imitate the apostles as they imitate Christ.

## FOUR FRIDAY: MEDITATION NOTES

*When you think about the philosophers of Paul's day, what would be our equivalent?*

*In what way was Paul trying to address the arrogance of the people in this passage?*

*Why did the people's judgment of Paul not matter to him?*

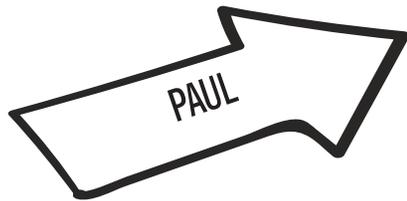
*How did Paul imitate Jesus in terms of popularity?*

*In what sense were the apostles 'fools for Christ'?*

## SATURDAY: CHANGE

We have learned from our passages that at the heart of these factions within the Corinthian church was the fact that people were from different ethnicities and were claiming the high ground over the rest. The Roman believers preferred Paul, the Greeks Apollos, and the Jewish believers, Peter.

It seems that what it came down to is that their allegiances to their ethnicities trumped their allegiances to the Kingdom of God. They were happy to maintain the unity within the church, as long as their ethnic backgrounds were not belittled or insulted. In a sense, they had divided allegiances.



When we think of ourselves, what postures do we take towards others in our church?

Are we willing to maintain unity, only if certain conditions are met or if certain things are avoided? It is quite clear that in the New Testament, God calls for our primary allegiance. All other groups, societies, and movements we belong to should be secondary to that. Therefore, as much as we should celebrate our backgrounds, ethnicities etc. we should ensure that those things do not hinder our commitment to Christ and his kingdom.



Paul reminds us what the church itself is, namely, the Temple of God wherein his Spirit lives.

Therefore, we should go the extra mile to ensure that we protect our relationships within the church. How do we view the church? How committed are we to God's kingdom? In our passage this week, we are reminded of the commitment of the apostles, who were immensely ill-treated for their faith, yet they kept the faith. Are we committed enough to maintain unity amongst ourselves? Are we humble enough to protect relationships?

## SATURDAY: CHANGE NOTES

RA Torrey lists the following as characteristics of Christians:

- Attentive to Christ's voice. Jno. 10:3, 4.
- Blameless and harmless. Phi. 2:15.
- Bold. Pro. 28:1. Rom. 13:3.
- Contrite. Isa. 57:15. Isa. 66:2.
- Devout. Acts 8:2. Acts 22:12.
- Faithful. Rev. 17:14.
- Fearing God. Mat. 3:16. Acts 10:2.
- Following Christ. Jno. 10:4, 27.
- Godly. Psalms. 4:3. 2 Pet. 2:9.
- Guileless. Jno. 1:47.
- Holy. Deu. 7:6. Deu. 14:2. Col. 3:12.
- Humble. Psalms. 34:2. 1 Pet. 5:5.
- Hungering after righteousness. Mat. 5:6.
- Just. Gen. 6:9. Hab. 2:4. Luke 2:25.
- Led by the Spirit. Rom. 8:14.
- Liberal. Isa. 32:8. 2 Cor. 9:13.
- Loving. Col. 1:4. 1 The. 4:9.
- Lowly. Pro. 16:19.
- Meek. Isa. 29:19. Mat. 5:5.
- Merciful. Psalms. 37:26. Mat. 5:7.
- New Creatures. 2 Cor. 5:17. Eph. 2:10.
- Obedient. Rom. 16:19. 1 Pet 1:14.
- Poor in spirit. Psalms. 51:17. Mat. 5:3.
- Prudent. Pro. 16:21.
- Pure in heart. Mat. 5:8. 1 Jno. 3:3.
- Righteous. Isa. 60:21. Luke 1:6.
- Sincere. 2 Cor. 1:12. 2 Cor. 2:17.
- Steadfast. Acts 2:42. Col. 2:5.
- Taught of God. Isa. 54:13. 1 Jno. 2:27.
- True. 2 Cor. 6:8.
- Undeified. Psalms. 119:1.
- Upright. 1 Kin. 3:6. Psalms. 15:2.
- Watchful. Luke 12:37.
- Zealous of good works. Tit. 2:14. Tit. 3:8.<sup>28</sup>

Circle the five characteristics most evident in your life.  
Underline the five most lacking.

*How did Jesus embody those 5 you are lacking?*

*How does this week's passage challenge your allegiances?*

## SUNDAY: COMMUNION

### Psalm 146:2-5

2 I will praise the Lord all my life;  
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. 3 Do not  
put your trust in princes,  
in human beings, who cannot save.  
4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;  
on that very day their plans come to nothing.  
5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God.

### Acts 10:23-26

The next day Peter started out with them, and some  
of the believers from Joppa went along. 24 The fol-  
lowing day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was  
expecting them and had called together his rel-  
atives and close friends. 25 As Peter entered the  
house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in  
reverence. 26 But Peter made him get up. "Stand up,"  
he said, "I am only a man myself."

### Acts 12:21-24

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal  
robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public  
address to the people. 22 They shouted, "This is  
the voice of a god, not of a man." 23 Immediately,  
because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel  
of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by  
worms and died. 24 But the word of God continued  
to spread and flourish.

### Mark 9:33-37

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the  
house, he asked them, "What were you arguing  
about on the road?" 34 But they kept quiet  
because on the way they had argued about  
who was the greatest. 35 Sitting down, Je-  
sus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who  
wants to be first must be the very last, and  
the servant of all."

36 He took a little child whom he placed  
among them. Taking the child in his arms,  
he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one of  
these little children in my name welcomes  
me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome  
me but the one who sent me."

### James 4:13-16

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow  
we will go to this or that city, spend a year  
there, carry on business and make mon-  
ey." 14 Why, you do not even know what will  
happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are  
a mist that appears for a little while and  
then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say,  
"If it is the Lord's will, we will live and  
do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in  
your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is  
evil.

OCTOBER 10  
**SERMON NOTES**

**FOUR** MONDAY: ACTION

Go on a prayer walk today in your neighbourhood. Let us not make judgments about the people we see, for that belongs to God. Rather, serve your neighbours by praying for them. Pray for their well-being, pray for their flourishing, pray for their relationships, and that they would see Jesus at work in their lives.



- 1) Who was more important, he that planted, or the one that watered? (6-7)
- 2) Upon what foundation is the church built? (11)
- 3) When will the work of workers be fully revealed? (13)
- 4) If those converted by preachers are lost, will the preachers be lost? (14-15)
  - 5) What sort of building is the church? (16)
  - 6) What is the wisdom of this world to God? (19)
  - 7) Why should we not glory in people? (21-22)
  - 8) And to whom do we belong? (23)
- 9) What two terms properly describe preachers of the gospel? (1)  
(ANSWERS IN APPENDIX)

Go through the following statistics about global Christianity,<sup>29</sup> asking God to enlarge your vision of your Christian family:

*What statistic stands out most to you? Why is that?*

## STATUS OF GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY, 2021

Year:	1900	1970	2000	Trend % p.a.	mid-2021
<b>GLOBAL POPULATION</b>					
1. Total population	1,619,625,000	3,700,578,000	6,145,007,000	1.19	7,875,465,000
2. Adult population (over 15)	1,073,646,000	2,311,829,000	4,295,756,000	1.50	5,878,250,000
3. Adults, % literate	27.6	63.8	76.7	0.45	84.2
<b>GLOBAL CITIES AND URBAN MISSION</b>					
4. Urban population (%)	14.4	36.6	46.7	0.92	56.6
5. Urban poor	100 million	650 million	1,400 million	3.10	2,660 million
6. Slum dwellers	20 million	260 million	700 million	3.36	1,400 million
7. Global urban population	232,695,000	1,354,213,000	2,868,301,000	2.12	4,455,416,000
8. Christian urban population	159,600,000	660,800,000	1,221,824,000	1.55	1,686,925,000
9. Cities over 1 million	20	145	371	2.26	593
10. Under 50% Christian	5	65	226	2.15	353
11. New non-Christians per day	5,200	51,100	137,000	0.95	167,000
<b>GLOBAL RELIGION</b>					
12. Religious diversity	0.27	0.43	0.45	-0.08	0.44
13. Religions	1,616,370,000	2,991,122,000	5,347,575,000	1.29	6,996,150,000
14. Christians	538,346,000	1,229,309,000	1,988,967,000	1.18	2,545,379,000
15. Muslims	200,301,000	570,567,000	1,291,280,000	1.92	1,926,115,000
16. Hindus	202,976,000	462,982,000	822,397,000	1.28	1,073,619,000
17. Buddhists	126,946,000	234,957,000	452,301,000	0.94	550,493,000
18. Chinese folk-religionists	379,974,000	238,027,000	431,244,000	0.42	471,103,000
19. Ethnoreligionists	117,313,000	169,417,000	224,055,000	0.89	269,949,000
20. New Religionists	5,986,000	39,557,000	62,943,000	0.19	65,441,000
21. Sikhs	2,962,000	10,668,000	19,973,000	1.71	28,538,000
22. Jews	11,725,000	13,902,000	12,881,000	0.68	14,838,000
23. Nonreligionists	3,255,000	709,456,000	797,432,000	0.47	879,315,000
24. Agnostics	3,028,000	544,300,000	656,410,000	0.52	731,705,000
25. Atheists	226,000	165,156,000	141,023,000	0.22	147,609,000
<b>GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY BY TRADITION</b>					
26. Total Christians, % of world	34.5	33.2	32.4	-0.01	32.3
27. Affiliated Christians	522,440,000	1,112,655,000	1,889,808,000	1.21	2,432,007,000
28. Roman Catholics	265,756,000	658,556,000	1,025,102,000	0.95	1,250,319,000
29. Protestants	134,196,000	251,901,000	429,180,000	1.36	593,660,000
30. Independents	8,859,000	89,480,000	284,439,000	1.60	396,991,000
31. Orthodox	116,199,000	141,930,000	237,741,000	0.62	293,599,000
32. Unaffiliated Christians	35,906,000	116,654,000	99,159,000	0.65	113,572,000
33. Evangelicals	80,912,000	111,809,000	270,635,000	1.80	393,545,000
34. Pentecostals/Charismatics	981,000	57,637,000	442,677,000	1.89	655,557,000
<b>CHURCH ORGANIZATION</b>					
35. Denominations / Rites	2,000	13,100	31,100	1.84	45,600
36. Congregations	400,000	1,329,000	3,000,000	1.84	4,100,000
<b>CHRISTIANS BY CONTINENT</b>					
37. Global North	459,901,000	703,710,000	816,017,000	0.10	832,729,000
38. Europe (including Russia; 4 regions)	380,647,000	492,068,000	562,140,000	0.01	563,906,000
39. Northern America (1 region)	79,254,000	211,642,000	253,877,000	0.27	268,822,000
40. Global South	98,445,000	525,599,000	1,172,950,000	1.82	1,712,851,000
41. Africa (5 regions)	9,640,000	140,023,000	382,510,000	2.81	684,931,000
42. Asia (5 regions)	21,966,000	95,758,000	279,960,000	1.50	382,829,000
43. Latin America (3 regions)	62,002,000	271,568,000	486,111,000	1.14	617,295,000
44. Oceania (4 regions)	4,837,000	18,250,000	24,369,000	0.63	27,796,000
<b>CHRISTIAN MISSION AND EVANGELIZATION</b>					
45. National workers (citizens)	2,100,000	4,600,000	10,900,000	0.92	13,200,000
46. Foreign missionaries	62,000	240,000	420,000	0.11	430,000
47. Foreign mission sending agencies	600	2,200	4,000	1.62	5,600
48. Christian martyrs per 10-years	344,000	3,770,000	1,600,000	-2.70	900,000
49. % in Christian countries	95.0	76.0	59.1	-0.39	54.4
50. Non-Christians who know a Christian (%)	5.3	13.2	17.3	0.24	18.2
<b>CHRISTIAN MEDIA</b>					
51. Books (titles) about Christianity	300,000	1,800,000	4,800,000	3.65	10,200,000
52. Christian periodicals (titles)	3,500	23,000	35,000	4.32	85,000
53. Bibles printed per year	5 million	25 million	54 million	2.52	91 million
54. Scriptures (including selections) printed per year	20 million	281 million	4,600 million	1.07	5,250 million
55. Bible density (copies in place)	108 million	443 million	1,400 million	1.04	1,740 million
56. Users of radio/TV/Internet	0	750 million	1,840 million	1.15	2,340 million
<b>CHRISTIAN FINANCE (IN US\$, PER YEAR)</b>					
57. Personal income of Christians	270 billion	4,100 billion	18,000 billion	5.08	51,000 billion
58. Giving to Christian causes	8 billion	70 billion	320 billion	4.75	848 billion
59. Churches' income	7 billion	50 billion	130 billion	4.68	340 billion
60. Parachurch and institutional income	1 billion	20 billion	190 billion	4.81	510 billion
61. Ecclesiastical crime	300,000	5,000,000	19 billion	5.22	55 billion
62. Income of global foreign missions	200 million	3 billion	18 billion	4.96	49 billion
<b>WORLD EVANGELIZATION</b>					
63. Unevangelized population	880,122,000	1,650,954,000	1,843,175,000	0.90	2,223,956,000
64. Unevangelized as % of world population	54.3	44.6	30.0	-0.29	28.2

*Can you imagine how many cultures are represented in Christianity? How is Christianity's ethnic diversity make it different from any other religion?*

*Considering the urbanization of the world, how should that impact our idea of being missional?*

## FOUR TUESDAY: CALIBRATION NOTES

*With all this diversity, how can the church remain united?*

*What must the church in Canada do to ensure it remains relevant 50 years from now?*

*How different would the world look if all these Christians lived like Jesus wants us to live?*

## FOUR WEDNESDAY: COMMUNITY

Just when you're needing a little encouragement, Community Day comes along. This is the day when you get together with the other members of your Mission Group. We want to dedicate this day to preparing for and meeting with your group.

Here are some questions to prepare for tonight. These questions are helpful talking points to discuss with your discipleship partner throughout the week.

*What have you learned this week around our theme?*

*What stood out for you in Sunday's sermon or the Study Guide?*

*What do you think God is saying to you?*

*What does God want you to do?*

*Where have you seen God at work during this last week?*

# FIVE

## WEEK FIVE: FOOLS FOR CHRIST (OCT 14-20, 1 COR 4:14-21)

### MORNING PRAYER

As we begin our day, spend a few minutes reading 1 Peter 1:13-16. Pray that the Lord will show you how to be for the world, but not of the world...with the world, but not like the world.

13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

### EVENING PRAYER

As we end our day, let us enter a time of liturgical prayer by praying Psalm 16:5-11. Where have you seen the Lord's footprints today? Praise him that his presence was with you today.

5 "Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. 6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. 7 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. 8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. 11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Listen to "No One But You" by Hillsong Worship on our series playlist: [bit.ly/1CORseries](https://bit.ly/1CORseries)



### MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

## ARTWORK: FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS



1 Peter 2:21 “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

The word “follow” is the Greek word *epakoloutheo*. It is a compound of the words *epe* and *akoloutheo*. In this context, the word *epe* means after, and the word *akoloutheo* is the word that means to follow. When compounded into one word as they are in this verse, the new word means to carefully follow after someone with the goal to replicate what he or she does. It depicts a person so committed to imitating another person that he is willing to follow him exactly and to do whatever he does. This is a picture of true discipleship.

The word *epakoloutheo* could only describe a person who is very serious about replicating someone else’s life in his own. Although everyone will not heed it, this call to replicate the life of Jesus is a call that God has given to every child of God. But as Peter continued, he used a word to explicitly show how closely we are to imitate the life of Jesus in our own lives.

Peter went on to say that we should follow “in his steps.” The word “steps” is the Greek word *ichnos*, a word that means footprints — precisely like the footprints I left in the sand at the beach. It is the picture of us putting our feet exactly where Jesus first placed His feet, stepping in His very footprints and following His actions in every circumstance we face. The verse could therefore read, “We must ardently follow Him to replicate His life in ours. Yes, we must be so committed to following Him that we step in His very footprints.”<sup>30</sup>

If we truly seek to follow in Christ’s footsteps, will our relationships not reflect that? How did Jesus treat other people? How did he love? What did he pray? At the very heart of the Christian movement is the call to reflect Christ.

C.S Lewis put it like this “Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life we also shall be sons of God. We shall love the Father as He does and the Holy Ghost will arise in us. He came to this world and became a man to spread to other men the kind of life He has — by what I call “good infection.” Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.”

There are different ways of learning. Inspire Education lists 7 different learning styles:

- Visual – You need to draw things out;
- Aural - You need someone to tell you something out loud ;
- Verbal - You love to write and read;
- Physical - Learning happens when you carry out a physical activity;
- Logical - You like logical and mathematical reasoning;
- Social – You prefer social or interpersonal learning;
- Solitary - You are more private, independent and introspective.<sup>31</sup>

There is probably one of these styles that describe each one of us best. However, for most of us, we learn through a combination of styles. We need time alone to digest an idea, but it is also helpful to speak about it to friends...we need to see things, hear them, and read them. Then, of course, we learn through implementation and practice.

Well, a similar thing can be said about Christian discipleship. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1 “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” This implied that being a disciple of Jesus means more than simply listening to more teachings (as important as that is). He does not say “Listen to my teaching, as I listen to the teaching of Christ?”<sup>32</sup> It means that we follow his example. It means that we live as he lived.

Well, we might say, Jesus is not bodily present at the moment so how can we learn from him apart from reading his story? This is why Jesus has given us a family to belong to, that he aptly refers to as ‘his body’. He has given us mature believers to surround us. People whom he has anointed for leadership. He has given us elders and deacons. People of character and integrity (although not perfect). People who, like us, are trying to follow his example as best as they can. People who we can imitate because they are imitating Jesus. We can look at their lives, we can speak to them, we can hear from them, we can see Christianity demonstrated through their lives. And by living in a relationship with these people we can learn what it means to be a mature disciple of Jesus. In turn, we also get to be those types of people to others.

**DISCIPLESHIP  
IS THE PROCESS OF BECOMING WHO  
JESUS WOULD BE IF HE WERE  
YOU  
- DALLAS WILLARD**

According to the 2013 movie Terms and Conditions May Apply, it would take the average American 180 hours per year to read all the “terms and conditions” he or she agrees to on websites and other agreements. It is no wonder that almost everyone checks the box indicating they agree with these lengthy documents filled with legal jargon. Most of us would not understand it even if we read it. The point of the movie is that we are often agreeing to things that could end up costing us that which we never expected. Many people who make a decision for Christ do not read the “terms and conditions” before saying “Yes!” Then when the road is difficult and Jesus calls us to suffer, we ask, “Why?” We must count the cost before committing to follow him. And follow—for it will be worth all you have to give and more than he will ever ask of you.<sup>33</sup>

## FIVE THURSDAY: EXPLORATION NOTES

*What learning method most resonates with you? Why is that?*

*How were you trained in your profession? Which of these methods were used?*

*Why is it important to see the Christian life demonstrated as well? Why isn't informational teaching enough?*

*What teaching methods did Jesus employ with his disciples?*

## FIVE FRIDAY: MEDITATION

*Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-21.*

Paul ends this section of dealing with the disunity among the Christians, by reflecting his heart. He does not want to shame them but wants to warn them...for their good. The tone of voice in this paragraph is really important. Paul is serious, but he is making his serious points in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek way. 'You've had thousands of babysitters, but you've only got one father!'

In that context, the 'guardian' or 'babysitter' was usually a resident slave in a household, whose job it was to look after the children while the parents were out, and to try to stop them from getting into mischief. This, Paul implies, is what all the other teachers in Corinth are like. But the father is coming back soon, and everything will be sorted out. Do they want him to come with a rod, or to come as a father should, with open arms and a big smile?

Again, Paul addresses the arrogance within the church. He calls them out for having much to say, but questions their power. Here, he implies that there is a large difference between philosophical debating and preaching the gospel of Jesus. The power that Paul refers to isn't simply the 'authority' that he might claim as the one who became their father by preaching the gospel to them.

As N.T. Wright puts it, "his power is the power that comes, through prayer and the spirit, when he preaches and teaches the gospel. Paul has preached and taught enough by now to know that when he speaks of Jesus, his cross and his resurrection, things happen. People's hearts and minds are changed. Those who were rebellious, or clinging to sinful ways, find themselves convicted, conscience-stricken, and eager to embrace the forgiveness and new life which the gospel offers."<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, and not for the last time in the letter (see chapter 11:1) he urges them to remember the way he conducted his life and to imitate him. We need to remind ourselves when reading this, that nobody in Corinth had ever witnessed somebody living the way Paul lived: giving of himself generously, living a life of self-sacrifice, and refusing to play the power and prestige.

Paul was different, and the difference mattered because he was modelling the Christ-life. He hadn't just done it in Corinth; this was how he lived and taught everywhere. Hereby, Paul calls the church at Corinth, to imitate their spiritual father who in turn imitates Christ by walking the way of the cross. This way of living, he believes, is the antidote needed to address the disunity in the church.

## FIVE FRIDAY: MEDITATION NOTES

*What is Paul's heart here? Does he want to be harsh?*

*How is Paul the Corinthian church's spiritual father?*

*What role does imitation play in discipleship?*

*How does imitation or discipleship help to combat disunity in the church?*

## FIVE SATURDAY: CHANGE

Read Matthew 28:16-20. One of the clearest commands Jesus gave his disciples was to go and make disciples of others. This practice is right at the center of what we are about: Disciples making disciples. Nobody ever gets beyond this. We can all continue to learn and grow regardless of how long we've been Christian.

Sharing our lives with others in this way helps us not to put some on pedestals, as we find at Corinth, and also helps us not to think too highly of ourselves. The reason for this is because in discipleship we are real with each other. We are vulnerable with each other and seek to keep each other accountable. Many conflicts between Christians can be resolved if we are in discipleship relationships where we can receive clarity.



*Do you have a spiritual father or mother (a life that you can imitate)? Are you discipling others? Why are these important?*

*How does discipleship help us not to place people on pedestals?*

*How can the idea of discipleship help you to handle conflict well within the church?*

## SUNDAY: COMMUNION

### John 12:23-26

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

### Hebrews 6:10-12

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

### Hebrews 13:7-8

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

OCTOBER 17

# SERMON NOTES

**FIVE**  
MONDAY: ACTION

Spend some time today with your discipleship partner.

Discuss the condition of the relationships in your life. What is the state of your relationships like with your spouse and kids, or your partner? What about your relationships with fellow Christians? Are there any issues with anyone that you need to speak about? Have a conversation about how you can protect the relationships in your life.



- 1) Why was Paul writing these things to them? (14)
- 2) How had Paul become like a “father” to them? (15)
- 3) Why was he sending Timothy to them? (17)
- 4) What one phrase is used repeatedly in this chapter to describe some at Corinth? (6,18,19)
- 5) What choices did Paul leave them as to how he might come to them? (21)  
(ANSWERS IN APPENDIX)



The story of Derek Redmond and his father helping him across the finish line of the 400m at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics remains one of the most striking images of fatherhood.

This, I think, depicts the fatherhood Paul felt towards the Corinthians. His touching video can be seen on our series playlist: [bit.ly/1CORseries](https://bit.ly/1CORseries)

Here's Derek's story from *The Guardian*:

*"On the day everything went smooth. I got a really good start, which was unusual for me. I think I was the first to react to the pistol. My normal tactics were to get around the first bend and then put the burners on for 30m, accelerate hard. But by the time I'd got upright I was almost round the bend, much further than usual, and I decided not to bother, to save my energy in case I had to fight for the line. About three strides later I felt a pop."*

*It was his hamstring. Redmond collapsed to the floor, clutching his leg. Most athletes would have been quietly carried off the track and towards medical attention, but as the Red Cross workers approached Redmond instead pushed himself back to his feet.*

*"I got up quicker than I got out of my blocks," he said. "I said to myself: 'There's no way I'm going to be stretchered out of these Olympics.' I didn't know where I was. I believed I could still qualify."*

*Bizarrely, the reason Redmond first started limping around the track was a belief that if he limped fast enough he might still overtake four people and qualify for the final. "Believe me, at the time I thought I was running," he said later. "It's only when I see the playback I realize I wasn't running very quick at all."*

*Meanwhile, Redmond's father Jim was fighting his way onto the track. "When I saw Derek hit the deck, I thought it was my mind playing tricks on me," he told the Guardian. "I'm very involved in his training so I knew just how to fit he was. All I can remember after that is telling the coach, Tony Hadley, to look after my camera. The next thing I knew, I was on the track."*

*Jim told his son to stop, in case the injury might heal in time for him to compete in the relay. Derek refused. "Well then," Jim said, "we're going to finish this together."<sup>35</sup>*

## FIVE TUESDAY: CALIBRATION NOTES

*What emotions did you experience when you read this story or watched the video?*

*How is this a picture of Paul and the Corinthian church?*

*Have you had times when it's felt like you've pulled a hamstring 'spiritually'? What role did others around you play at that time?*

*Why is it important to run this race in community?*

## FIVE WEDNESDAY: COMMUNITY

Just when you're needing a little encouragement, Community Day comes along. This is the day when you get together with the other members of your Mission Group. We want to dedicate this day to preparing for and meeting with your group.

Here are some questions to prepare for tonight. These questions are helpful talking points to discuss with your discipleship partner throughout the week.

*What have you learned this week around our theme?*

*What stood out for you in Sunday's sermon or the Study Guide?*

*What do you think God is saying to you?*

*What does God want you to do?*

*Where have you seen God at work during this last week?*

## APPENDIX

### 2021 - 2022 PRAYER PRIORITIES

1. Continued Growth in prayer, both personally and corporately.
2. Increased Love for Neighbour and Neighbourhood
3. Increased Generosity
4. Faithful Stewarding of our Properties
5. Growing Leadership
6. Awareness of God's power and presence
7. Maturing in Apprenticeship/Discipleship

### KNOWLEDGE CHECK ANSWERS

#### Week 1:

- 1) - Sosthenes
- 2) - Spiritual gifts
- 3) - Division
- 4) - The household of Chloe
- 5) - Calling themselves after men
- 6) - Crispus, Gaius, the household of Stephanus
- 7) - Lest they should say he baptized in his name

#### Week 2:

- 1) - Foolishness to those who are perishing and the power of God to those being saved
- 2) - A stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks
- 3) - By using that which in their sight is foolish, weak, base, despised
- 4) - Only in the Lord
- 5) - Not with the excellence of speech or of wisdom. Determined to preach only Jesus and Him crucified
- 6) - In weakness, in fear, and much trembling
- 7) - Demonstration of the Spirit and power

#### Week 3:

- 1) - "Things which God has prepared"
  - "God has revealed...through His Spirit"
  - "We have received...the Spirit"
  - "That we might know the things...freely given to us by God"

- "These things we also speak"
  - "In words...which the Spirit teaches"
- 2) - "not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual"
  - 3) - Does not receive the things of the Spirit of God
    - They are foolishness to him
    - He cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned
  - 4) - Able to judge all things
    - None can rightly judge him
    - Has the mind of Christ
  - 5) - They were carnal, still babes in Christ
  - 6) - Their envy, strife, and divisions, as manifested in calling themselves after men

#### Week 4:

- 1) - Neither, it was God who gave the increase
- 2) - Jesus Christ
- 3) - On the last Day
- 4) - No, but their reward will not be as great
- 5) - The temple of God, indwelt by His Spirit
- 6) - Foolishness
- 7) - Because they are but instruments of God used to benefit us
- 8) - Christ
- 9) - Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God
- 10) - The Lord
- 11) - That none be "puffed up" on behalf of one against the other
- 12) - Irony
- 13) - The apostles

#### Week 5:

- 1) - To warn those he loved
- 2) - Through teaching them the gospel by which they had been "begotten" in Christ Jesus
- 3) - To remind them of Paul's ways in Christ
- 4) - "puffed up"
- 5) - With a rod. In love and a spirit of gentleness

## Endnotes

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